

**11/22/22 Tuesday**

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US to Disburse \$4.5 Billion Direct Budget Support for Ukraine  
By - Fantine Gardinier

The US Treasury announced on Tuesday that it would disburse \$4.5 million to Ukraine in the coming weeks, according to a press release.

"Today, the United States continued to uphold its unwavering commitment to Ukraine with the mobilization of an additional \$4.5 billion in grants for direct budget support," US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen [said in the release](#).

"These funds will begin disbursing in the coming weeks and help the Government of Ukraine defend against Russia's illegal war by bolstering economic stability and supporting core government services, including wages for hospital workers, government employees, and teachers as well as social assistance for the elderly and vulnerable."

She noted that the latest disbursement would [bring total US direct budget](#) support to Ukraine to \$13 billion, all in grants.

In addition, the US has funneled more than \$18.3 billion in military equipment to Ukraine, ranging from medical equipment to small arms and HIMARS rocket artillery. Other NATO allies have donated billions more, much of it ex-Soviet equipment, and [received compensation](#) from Washington in return.

The move comes amid news that the US, other Group of Seven (G7) nations, and the European Union have reportedly agreed upon a [unilaterally imposed price cap](#) on purchases of Russian petroleum of between \$60 and \$70 per barrel, which would take effect on December 5.

The cap was proposed in response to continued high crude oil prices in global markets, which have been driven higher as a result of Western responses to the special operation. The US and its allies hoped a boycott would undercut the Russian economy, but Moscow shifted its exports east, instead, and has profited from the higher market prices.

Russian state-owned energy firm Gazprom halted gas pumping to Europe through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline in early September over another imposed price cap, saying it violated the terms of their agreement.

The price caps are part of an effort by the US Treasury to deny Moscow the financial resources to continue its special operation in Ukraine. Other efforts include [tightening enforcement](#) of Western sanctions against Russia, particularly against its energy and financial sectors.

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China to Have Moon Base Powered by New Nuclear Power Plant by 2028, Lunar Exploration Chief Says  
By - Fantine Gardinier

Leading the charge in a new generation of lunar exploration has been the China National Space Administration (CNSA), which has dispatched several probes to the moon from its Chang'e series. They have explored the far side of the moon and sent back the first lunar soil samples in 40 years.

The Chinese space program is working on a new type of nuclear power plant to be used to power a permanent base on the moon, which China hopes to build before the decade is out, the head of China's lunar exploration effort told Chinese media on Tuesday.

Wu Weiren, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and the chief designer of the Chang'e program, revealed on China Central Television (CCTV) that the next several Chang'e spacecraft, Chang'e 6, 7, and 8, will lay the groundwork for the future International Lunar Research Station (ILRS), which they hope to have in place by 2028.

However, a necessary step is to first develop a new type of nuclear power plant that can operate on the lunar surface, which is beset by temperature extremes, endangered by meteor strikes, and has no water for cooling.

"We are currently developing a new energy system where nuclear energy can provide high-power and long-time supply. And the communication facility can achieve communication between the Moon and the Earth, or with other planets such as Mars," Wu said.

He didn't give further details, but past reports have suggested the plant will be able to produce 1 megawatt of power, which is about 100 times more than the 1-kilowatt reactor US space agency [NASA plans to make](#) with its own lunar nuclear reactor.

China's nuclear reactor won't be the first one in space: the Soviet Union used tiny "fast fission" power plants on dozens of satellites, and the US has experimented with satellite nuclear power plants, too. China's Yutu 2 moon rover also carried a tiny nuclear reactor, which generated just enough power to keep it warm when out of the sun.

Numerous other spacecraft, including deep space probes, have used the heat generated by the decay of radioactive elements to keep their circuits warm, or to create tiny amounts of electricity via other means. Other spacecraft and probes have used solar panels or chemical fuel to generate power.

However, Wu said that for permanent human settlement in space, newer and more powerful types of power are needed, including for the rockets themselves, which he said need to be at least four times more powerful than at present.

The new base will reportedly be built near the moon's south pole, providing it with constant sunlight and a unique vantage point. The moon rotates at the same speed it orbits the Earth, resulting in one side always facing the Earth's surface and the other always facing away, and a two-week-long day and equally long night.

Wu said the outpost will include landers, rovers, reusable ascenders and in-orbit craft.

Nuclear fusion power, which is vastly more powerful and doesn't produce the radioactive waste of nuclear fission, [has yet to be turned](#) into a useful source of electricity. However, once it's figured out, Helium-3, an isotope of the inert gas [discovered in the lunar soil](#) in a sample returned by the Chang'e-5 spacecraft, could one day provide a better source of power for a moon base.

Other nations also have their sights set on lunar exploration. NASA's Artemis 1 mission sent the Orion capsule into lunar orbit earlier this month, with the spacecraft [zipping just 81 miles](#) over



the lunar surface on Monday. Artemis 2 will see human astronauts orbit the moon, and Artemis 3 is expected to carry humans to the moon for the first time since 1972.

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US Senate to Investigate Live Nation's 'Dominant Market Position' After Taylor Swift Ticket Fiasco

By - Fantine Gardinier

Since Ticketmaster's sales system buckled under the weight of millions of Taylor Swift fans last week, new calls have circulated among fans and politicians alike for the company to face the music over its cornering of the ticket sales market.

US media reports that the Senate would soon hold a hearing on monopoly practices by Live Nation Entertainment, the parent company of Ticketmaster, were confirmed on Tuesday by US Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN).

"The high fees, site disruptions and cancellations that customers experienced shows how Ticketmaster's dominant market position means the company does not face any pressure to continually innovate and improve," Klobuchar, who chairs the Senate's antitrust committee, told reporters.

"That's why we will hold a hearing on how consolidation in the live entertainment and ticketing industry harms customers and artists alike," Klobuchar added. She did not provide a date or a list of witnesses.

The senator is one of several lawmakers who have spent the last week calling for such a hearing, and urging the US Department of Justice (DOJ) to open a new antitrust probe of Live Nation. Reports began [circulating on Friday](#) that a probe had been opened, but the DOJ has not confirmed its existence.

In a Monday letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland and Jonathan Kanter, head of the DOJ's antitrust division, Sens. Klobuchar, Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Edward Markey (D-MA) urged the DOJ to divorce the two companies.

"While we are encouraged by recent reports that the Department is already investigating Live Nation's conduct, an investigation alone does nothing for the stakeholders already harmed by Live Nation's market dominance and seemingly ongoing anticompetitive behavior," [the senators wrote](#).

"If the investigation reveals that Live Nation has continued to abuse its dominant market position notwithstanding two prior consent decrees, we urge the Department to consider unwinding the Ticketmaster-Live Nation merger and breaking up the company. This may be the only way to truly protect consumers, artists, and venue operators and to restore competition in the ticketing market," they added.

Bungled Tour Sale

The fiasco began last Tuesday, when tickets to singer Taylor Swift's forthcoming "The Eras Tour" went on presale for "Verified Fans." Overloaded with unexpected volume by fans excited for Swift's first tour in four years, the site became clogged and many fans waited for hours. Then,

on Friday, Ticketmaster [canceled the release](#) of Eras tickets for sale to the general public, citing the problems with the Tuesday event.

Swift took to Instagram to respond, saying "it really pisses me off" that Ticketmaster assured her it could handle the sales volume and that her beloved fans would receive easy and fast service. Fury over the debacle has also driven Swifties - Taylor Swift's enthusiastic fan base - into action as well, with groups like Vigilante Legal and Break Up Ticketmaster seeking to help attorneys general make the case for the company's cornering of the market.

#### Longstanding Monopoly Accusations

It isn't the first time Ticketmaster has been accused of monopoly practices. Grunge band Pearl Jam sued the company in 1994, but the DOJ declined to take up the case. When Live Nation moved to buy Ticketmaster in 2010, reports of its anti-market activities resurfaced, but the DOJ was satisfied with pledges by Live Nation not to abuse its market position.

Among the accusations of monopoly practices are claims that Ticketmaster has arbitrarily increased ticket prices, [added abundant fees](#) to its sales, and that it corners the market by forcing venues to sell tickets exclusively through their website.

In the wake of the botched sale, Ticketmaster tried to pass the blame on to AEG Presents, Swift's tour promoter, by saying they chose to work with Ticketmaster. But on Tuesday, AEG pushed back.

"Ticketmaster's exclusive deals with the vast majority of venues on the 'Eras' tour required us to ticket through their system," AEG said in a [statement to CNBC](#). "We didn't have a choice."

Live Nation controls 60% of the market for promotion of major concerts and is the exclusive provider for tickets at 80 of the top 100 performance arenas in the United States.

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'I'm Done!': Anarchy During White House Presser as Journos Shout Questions at Fauci  
By - Fantine Gardinier

Chaos erupted in the White House briefing room on Tuesday after a journalist shouted a question out of order.

Tuesday was the last White House COVID-19 briefing by Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and top pandemic adviser to the Biden administration. While Fauci had some solemn reflections about his time in the position and made an appeal for more Americans to get the new bivalent COVID-19 vaccine boosters ahead of an anticipated winter outbreak, a few reporters had other plans.

While the exact question that New York Post reporter Steven Nelson asked of Fauci was unclear, according to reports, he wanted to know what Fauci had personally done to investigate the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. Another journalist, Daily Caller correspondent Diana Glebova, claimed on Twitter to have asked the same question.

"I always come with honest answers that Americans want to know," Glebova said. "That's why the White House refuses to call on me, and then calls ME 'disrespectful.'"



However, as multiple people shouted questions at the medical professional, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre stepped up to the podium to try and restore order.

"We have a process here," Jean-Pierre said. "I'm not calling on people who yell and you're being disrespectful to your colleagues and you're being disrespectful to our guest. I will not call on you if you yell, and also you're taking time off the clock because Dr. Fauci has to leave in a couple of minutes."

Her efforts accomplished little, and reporters immediately objected to the situation.

"I'm done!" Jean-Pierre retorted. "I'm not getting into a back-and-forth with you."

However, that only caused even more shouting. Africa Today's Simon Ateba emerged as the leading voice, asserting to Jean-Pierre that "you should allow her to ask the question ... She's asking about the origins of COVID-19, and Dr. Fauci is the best person to answer that question."

"I hear the question!" Jean-Pierre shouted back at him. "But we're not doing this the way you want it! This is disrespectful. I'm done. Simon, I'm done. I'm done with you right now."

It was perhaps the biggest shakeup at a White House press conference [since November 2018](#), when CNN correspondent Jim Acosta pressed then-US President Donald Trump about his disparaging comments about Latino asylum seekers entering the US via the US-Mexico border. Although in that case, Acosta had at least been called on to speak at first.

"I think you should let me run the country and you run CNN," Trump told Acosta after a hostile back-and-forth. He then turned to call on another reporter, and Acosta raised his voice to ask another question about the Russiagate investigation.

After an aide rushed up and took the microphone from Acosta, Trump scolded the reporter, saying "CNN should be ashamed of itself, having you work for them. You are a rude, terrible person."

However, Acosta pressed the question still, and Trump told him that "when you report fake news, which CNN does a lot, you are the enemy of the people."

Acosta's White House press credentials were [suspended for over a week](#) as a result of the fiasco.

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Video: At Least 35 Injured After Magnitude 6.0 Earthquake Rocks Western Turkey

Early reports indicated the quake was felt as far away as Turkish city Istanbul and capital Ankara. At present, there have been no indications of severe structural damages or fatalities; however, officials have said at least 35 individuals sustained injuries.

A strong magnitude 6.0 was recorded in western Turkey early Wednesday and appeared to have been felt over a distance of more than 200 kilometers, the European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre has detailed.

Findings released by the nonprofit organization indicated the earthquake was felt at a depth of 6 kilometers near Duzce, the capital of Turkey's western Duzce Province. At present, one aftershock - a magnitude 3.0 - was recorded in the same vicinity.

Not long after reports first emerged of the earthquake, Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca indicated that 22 individuals had been injured in Duzce. One person sustained serious injuries after having jumped "from a height."

A preliminary reading captured by the US Geological Survey determined that the initial quake had measured on the richter scale at a magnitude 6.1, and hit at a depth of 10 kilometers.

Testimonies collected by the EMSC organization ranged in their descriptions of the event, with some noting the quake woke them up or caused the electricity to go out in their home.

"It wasn't very scary," wrote one user who was located some 58 kilometers from the epicenter.

"It took 10 seconds as far as I can tell."

Another user remarked that their home was "rocking like a cradle."

The deadliest quake to have occurred near Duzce took place in August 1999, when a magnitude 7.8 quake caused the deaths of over 17,000 individuals. EMSC noted that earthquakes of similar strength hit the area in 1944 and 1970, killing a combined total of over 5,000 residents.

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Brazil's Bolsonaro Files Complaint Challenging Election Results Over 'Malfunctioning' Ballot Boxes

By - Mary Manley

At the center of Bolsonaro's challenge to the Superior Electoral Court to invalidate votes are the "irreparable malfunctioning non-conformities" of five different ballot boxes used in the 2022 general elections. The president's complaint was also backed by the president of the Liberal Party Valdemar da Costa Neto.

The outgoing Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro filed a complaint Tuesday with the electoral court claiming the result of the recent presidential election was invalid on account of "malfunctioning" ballot boxes.

The filing claimed that ballot box models UE2009, UE2010, UE2011, UE2013 and UE2015 were reported to have been "malfunctioning" during Election Day. In total, the claim alleges that over 350,000 votes registered by the specified ballot boxes were invalid.

It's worth noting that the amount of ballots being refuted by the Bolsonaro camp would effectively give him the winning ticket for the October runoff election.

The findings submitted to Brazil's Supreme Electoral Court were audited by the Institute of Legal Vote; however, the documents presented before the court did not include an audit of the voting machines used during the first round of the election. The same ballot boxes used during the second round were used in the first round of voting in early October.

Alexandre de Moraes, the lead justice of the electoral court, has ordered Bolsonaro and company to submit its full account for both election rounds within the next 24 hours, noting that the complaint would be vacated if the deadline was not met.

Bolsonaro, 67, was first elected as president of Brazil in 2019 after leaving the Social Liberal Party of Brazil but not before he converted it into a nationalist, economically liberal, and socially



conservative party. His second presidential bid came to an end after being bested by President-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, 76, who was president of Brazil from 2003 until 2010, and is a member of, as well as the former president of the Worker's Party (PT).

Lula's win against Bolsonaro was slim, with Bolsonaro winning 49% of the votes (58.2 million) compared to Lula's 50.9% (60.3 million).

The outgoing president has failed to publicly concede defeat to his opponent and has previously made unfounded claims about electoral fraud while his supporters protest in the streets.

Bolsonaro's [filing](#) to invalidate votes in the 2022 election, which seems unlikely to get far, has added fuel to fears that he will not transition his power peacefully to Lula, his leftist opponent.

Lula's victory has already been ratified by the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) and acknowledged by other leading politicians and international [allies](#), including US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin

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Melting Glaciers Are Releasing Tonnes of Bacteria Into Rivers and Streams, Study Reveals  
By - Mary Manley

Potentially harmful pathogens and other thousands of microbes could leak into rivers and lakes as the glaciers melt from human-caused climate change. As the bacteria and algae melt off of the glacier's surface an average of 650,000 tonnes of carbon could be released into the northern hemisphere per year.

A new study has revealed that tonnes of bacteria are being released by melting glacier ice surfaces in our Northern Hemisphere. How this will impact our ecosystem requires further study, but it could increase the amount of carbon produced by the tens of thousands.

"We think of glaciers as a huge store of frozen water but the key lesson from this research is that they are also ecosystems in their own right," said Arwyn [Edwards](#), microbiologist and study author of Aberystwyth University in the UK.

"Globally there are 200,000 catchments of note that are fed by glacial meltwater and some of these are very sensitive environments that are poorly developed in terms of organic carbon and nutrients," said Edwards.

As the microbes are flushed downstream there is a possibility that they could fertilize the ecosystems they come into contact with, the researchers said, but whether or not any of these are pathogens (a microbe with the ability to cause a disease) remains unknown. And a more hopeful outcome as a result of these microbes could be the potential for new antibiotics. Still, what kind of microbes they are remains unknown.

"We don't have enough data to understand the value and the threat of these organisms. I routinely get inquiries about whether there is going to be a doomsday pathogen melting out of the glaciers. I think that's a very minor risk, but it's not a zero risk, so we need risk assessment of these microbes," said Edwards.

But one thing is for certain: scientists predict that the glacial runoffs from 10 sites across the Northern Hemisphere will release more than 100,000 tonnes of bacteria over the next 80 years.

The figure is the equivalent to [650,000 tonnes](#) of carbon being released into rivers, lakes, fjords and oceans a year, all depending on how fast the glaciers melt, and whether or not humans are able to curb climate change.

"The number of microbes released depends closely on how quickly the glaciers melt, and therefore how much we continue to warm the planet. But the mass of microbes released is vast even with moderate warming," Edwards added.

The process of glacial melting is somewhat self-acting too, as the glaciers melt, the microbes within them will increase the heating process by releasing pigments they use to protect themselves from sun damage, thus increasing the warming process and destroying their own habitat.

Scientists for this study compiled their research using samples of meltwater from four glaciers in the European Alps, as well as glaciers in Canada, Sweden, Svalbard, and the western Greenland ice sheet.

The findings were published in the Nature Communications Earth and Environment [journal](#).

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Bruce Lee Died From Drinking Too Much Water, Researchers Claim

By - Mary Manley

The Asian-American martial artist and actor died at the age of 32 in 1973. Lee conceived Jeet Kune Do, an eclectic martial arts philosophy. The pop culture icon is considered to be the most influential martial artist of all time and starred in at least 18 films and paved a way for better representation of Asian-Americans in movies.

The rising [star](#), who was capable of doing two-finger pushups and one-inch punches, died at an early age before he could see mainstream success in America. Nearly 50 years later, a group of specialists have proposed that Bruce Lee's death was caused by his "kidney's inability to excrete excess water."

Brain swelling was ruled the initial cause of Lee's death after the actor and martial artist was found unconscious while taking a nap in the home of colleague Betty [Ting](#) Pei. However, the new study's authors suggest Lee's history of kidney injuries, alcohol intake, marijuana use, low blood sodium and "chronic" fluid intake were all "multiple risk factors" contributing to hyponatraemia.

history of kidney injuries, alcohol intake, marijuana use, low blood sodium and "chronic" fluid intake were the contributing factors for hyponatraemia

"We hypothesize that Bruce Lee died from a specific form of kidney dysfunction: the inability to excrete enough water to maintain water homeostasis... This may lead to hyponatraemia, cerebral oedema and death within hours if excess water intake is not matched by water excretion in urine," the paper concludes.

"Given that hyponatraemia is frequent, as is found in up to 40% of hospitalized persons and may cause death due to excessive water ingestion even in young healthy persons, there is a need for a wider dissemination of the concept that excessive water intake can kill."



In 1973, Lee collapsed at a film studio in Hong Kong while working on the film "Enter the Dragon." Lee had been experiencing seizures and headaches prior to his collapse and was taken to a nearby hospital where he experienced a headache and cerebral oedema and was treated.

Months later, he had a headache at his co-star's house and was later found unconscious after ingesting the painkiller Equagesic. He was pronounced dead after being transported to Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Conspiracy theories circulated the young star's death, who would have celebrated his 81st birthday this month. Fans have speculated he was assassinated by gangsters, while others believed he had been the target of a curse. In July, over 40 letters written by Lee to the actor Robert Baker were leaked and suggested the artist had used cocaine, LSD, and cannabis. In a 1970 letter he [wrote](#): "I told Linda to call you to forget about the 'stuff' because I really don't need them in my training. I feel that I have 'gained' in trying them, but excessive indulgence of them just isn't in my road in Jeet Kune Do."

The findings were published in the upcoming December 2022 edition of the [Clinical Kidney Journal](#).

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Balenciaga Apologizes After Being Blasted Over Ad Showing Children Holding Teddy Bears in Bondage

By - Mary F.

The luxury fashion house is apologizing after they came under fire for an ad which shows children holding teddy bears purses dressed in bondage gear. But if the teddy bears seemed like a relatively innocent, though tasteless choice, an image of a Supreme Court opinion in a child pornography case was not-so-discreetly placed in the ad as a prop.

[Balenciaga](#) is going out of style.

The fashion house created an ad campaign featuring children holding teddy bear handbags dressed in bondage gear, and an image of a Supreme Court opinion on a child pornography case as a prop for the ad campaign's photoshoot.

The Spanish-turned-French label took to Instagram to apologize for their campaign since they had recently departed Twitter, an action which may have been the result of the new CEO Elon Musk's decision to make child exploitation his first [priority](#).

"We sincerely apologise for any offense our holiday campaign may have caused," the statement read. "Our plush bear bags should not have been featured with children in this campaign. We have immediately removed the campaign from all platforms."

"We apologise for displaying unsettling documents in our campaign," the company added. "We take this matter very seriously and are taking legal action against the parties responsible for creating the set and including unapproved items for our Spring '23 campaign photoshoot."

"We strongly condemn the abuse of children in any form," they continued. "We stand for children safety and well-being."

Despite the fashion house's statement, critics across social media are dragging the campaign for being "disgusting."

"I thought people were trolling, but nope. It's real. Maybe this is why Balenciaga left Twitter. They don't want to be held accountable. Yes, these are children holding teddy bears dressed in bondage outfits," one Twitter user [fumed](#).

The photoshoot was on the company's website as a part of a campaign named "Toy Stories" featuring child models posing with the plush handbags for their Paris Fashion Week Spring/Summer 2023 collection. Balenciaga deleted all posts related to the campaign on their Instagram account.

"The Balenciaga ad is disgusting. Toddlers posing with BDSM sex toys and alcohol. Hiding in plain sight a Supreme Court case involving a federal child porn law... Stop sexualizing kids to sell your ugly overpriced crap," said another Twitter user.

"Frightening how many adults must have been involved in this," one Twitter user mused.

"Parents, photographers, creative directors, copywriters, design agency staff, producers, managers, advertisers... and not one of them thought, 'hang on a minute?'"

The campaign also showed images of court documents concerning the [Ashcroft](#) v Free Speech Coalition, a 2002 case in which the court struck down a portion of the Child Pornography Prevention Act (CPPA) of 1996, and ruled that "virtual" child pornography is protected speech, such as the award-winning films such as the 1968 adaption of "Romeo and Juliet."

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Suspect Behind Mass Shooting at Virginia Walmart Died of Self-Inflicted Wound - Police  
MOSCOW, November 23 (Sputnik) - The suspect who killed six people and wounded four others at Virginia Walmart store died of self-inflicted wound, police chief Mark Solesky said on Wednesday.

"The suspect is dead from what we believe to be a self-inflicted wound," Solesky told reporters. He also confirmed that the person was an employee of the store but said there was no known motive for the attack.

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US Unequivocally Condemns Acts of Terror in Jerusalem - White House

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) – The United States unequivocally condemns the recent acts of terror in Jerusalem, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Wednesday.

"We condemn unequivocally the acts of terror overnight in Jerusalem," Jean-Pierre said in a statement.



A blast hit a central bus station in Jerusalem earlier on Wednesday, and shortly afterward, a second explosion hit a bus approaching it. According to Deputy Mayor Fleur Hassan-Nahoum, 18 people were wounded, with two in critical condition. Local media reported about 22 people wounded and one killed.

The United States has offered "all appropriate assistance" to Israel in investigating these tragic incidents, Jean-Pierre said. She also confirmed "ironclad and unbreakable" US commitment to Israel's security.

The twin blasts come on the heels of a series of armed attacks in different parts of Israel in recent months. Last week, a mass stabbing attack in the West Bank's Ariel killed three Israelis, and a car-blast struck near an Israel Defense Forces post in Mevo Dotan, killing the driver.

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RPT - Both Major Political Parties Have Failed Americans, Only Care About Power - Activists

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Both political parties in the United States have failed the American people because they are backed by corporate interests and only care about seizing power, activists told Sputnik.

In the midterm elections earlier in November, Democrats defied the pollsters by managing to maintain control of the Senate while losing the House by a slimmer margin than expected. Activist Sam P.K. Collins said neither political party deserved to get people's vote since they have both failed to adequately address inflation, affordable healthcare, and living wages, among other issues.

"Most candidates are backed by corporate interests or are political insiders," Collins said. "We have few candidates or members of Congress who are from the grassroots."

Republicans simply care about consolidating power and influence, he added, while Democrats fail to deliver on the right priorities.

"Progressives compromise - sacrificing the environment... and criminal justice and childcare to try to arrive at a consensus," Collins said.

Collins also said even with Democrats controlling both chambers, little has changed, especially for African Americans and other minorities.

"Where we are is no different than before," Collins said. "The collective material position of Black people in this country has not changed in 100 years."

Pennsylvania Voice Executive Director Salewa Ogunmefun said that there has been so much political divineness in the US while people are still unable to have one job to pay rent, housing is an issue and there are not enough resources in education.

Kerra Bolton, a former Director of Communications for the North Carolina Democratic Party, said Americans would rather attack each other than focus on the most important issues.

"The current evidence points out that its citizens want to be led by their fears of the 'other' and not a better future for our children and grandchildren," Bolton said.

Meanwhile, she added, although a radical right-wing Supreme Court overturned women's rights, Democrats failed to take steps to protect them.

"Democrats are such a weak party. They couldn't do it when they were in power, they couldn't do it when they were out of power," she said. "The truth is, they don't want to."

Now those who are of Gen X and older generations are likely not to leave this world better than they found it, Bolton added.

"Our children and grandchildren will have to fight the same battles we fought," she said.

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#### Canada Launches Investigation Into Chinese 'Police Service Stations' in Toronto - Police

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The Canadian Royal Mounted Police announced that it has launched an investigation into reports about Chinese "police service stations" in the city of Toronto.

"The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is investigating reports of possible foreign actor interference at undeclared "police service stations" believed to be operating on behalf of the People's Republic of China in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)," the RCMP said in a statement on Tuesday.

The RCMP noted in the statement it is aware of recent reports that accuse China of targeting the Chinese diaspora throughout Canada and is now investigating "all criminality" related to such activities.

"Our aim is to prevent intimidation, threats and harassment as well as any form of harm initiated on behalf of a foreign entity being applied to any community in Canada," the statement said.

The RCMP emphasized that foreign actor interference is considered a threat to Canada's national security as it allows direct meddling in the country's internal affairs, the statement also said.

All attempts made by foreign states to meddle in the lives of Canadian citizens, including through threats, harassment, intimidation or corruption, will be investigated by the RCMP, the statement added.

The authorities have requested Canadian citizens to communicate with them if they are aware of any activity arising from the alleged "police service stations" or if they have been threatened by China.

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#### Pelosi Says US House Will Hold 'Busy and Ambitious' Session Upon Returning From Holiday

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives will hold a "busy and ambitious" session after lawmakers return from the Thanksgiving holiday break, outgoing Speaker Nancy Pelosi said.



"When we return to Washington, the House will embark on a busy and ambitious legislative session. Let us savor and draw strength from this time at home with our loved ones as we prepare to meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. And let us be unified as a Caucus, as we prepare for the future," Pelosi said in a statement on Tuesday.

Pelosi expressed her gratitude to her husband Paul, who was recently the victim of a reported attack in his San Francisco home, the people of San Francisco and her Democratic Party colleagues.

Last week, Pelosi announced that she will not seek reelection to party leadership in the new Congress next year after Democrats lost control of the House of Representatives in the midterm elections.

Pelosi said it is time for a new generation to lead the Democratic caucus.

The Congress is currently operating in a so-called "lame duck" session, which occurs between elections and the new class of lawmakers taking office. Democrats retain control of both chambers through the lame duck session, during which the Defense Department seeks a defense spending bill passed and a government funding deadline looms.

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US Authorizes Oil Import From Russia's Sakhalin-2 to Japan Through September 30 - Treasury (Updates with more details, background in paras 3-7)

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The United States has allowed all transactions concerning maritime transport of crude oil from the Sakhalin-2 project solely for imports to Japan through September 30 of next year, the US Treasury Department said.

"GL [General License] 55 authorizes, through 12:01 a.m. eastern daylight time September 30, 2023, all transactions prohibited by the determination related to the maritime transport of crude oil originating from the Sakhalin-2 project ("Sakhalin-2 byproduct"), provided that the Sakhalin-2 byproduct is solely for importation into Japan," the Treasury Department said on Tuesday.

The Sakhalin-2 project is exploring two reserves - Piltun-Astokhskoye (mainly oil) and Lunskeye (mainly gas) - in the northeast of the Sakhalin shelf. The project was managed by Sakhalin Energy, in which 50% plus 1 share belong to the Russian energy giant Gazprom, 27.5% minus 1 share to the British-Dutch petroleum company Shell, 12.5% to Mitsui & Co. Ltd and 10% to the Mitsubishi Corporation.

In June, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on special economic measures in the fuel and energy sector amid unfriendly actions of foreign states. The decree provided for the change of the Sakhalin-2 operator. According to the decree, the property of Sakhalin Energy is to be handed over to Russia's ownership with simultaneous transfer to the new operator for free use.

Gazprom will maintain its stake in the project, while foreign firms have to declare within a month whether they agree to accept the same stake in the new operator. Then the Russian government will decide in three days whether to transfer a stake to a foreign company. The non-transferred shares will be sold and foreign companies will receive proceeds minus the cost of any damage caused by them.

On August 3, the Russian government ordered creating the Sakhalin Energy LLC - the new operator of the Sakhalin-2 project - registered in the city of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. On August 30, the Russian government published an order allowing Mitsui to take ownership of a 12.5% stake in the new operator. The following day, Moscow also allowed Mitsubishi to transfer a 10% stake to DGS Japan Co., Ltd, a 100% subsidiary of Mitsubishi.

However, Shell announced on September 1 that it not participate in the Sakhalin-2 project and informed its partners and the Russian government about its decision.

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UPDATE - House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy Says Support Audit of Taxpayer Funding for Ukraine

(Updates with change in dateline, details in para 2, background in paras 5,6,7)

EL PASO, Texas, November 23 (Sputnik) - House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy said that he supports an audit of aid provided to Ukraine by Congress using US taxpayer funds, when asked by Sputnik about a resolution introduced by Republican lawmakers last week to review the assistance.

"I support auditing every single tax dollar spent by Congress. This is hard-working taxpayer money. We should make sure no matter where we spend money that it's audited and spent wisely," McCarthy said on Tuesday during a press conference when asked by Sputnik if he supported a Republican resolution to audit aid sent to Ukraine.

Last week, House Republicans including Marjorie Taylor Greene and Thomas Massie introduced a resolution pursuing an audit of congressional aid to Ukraine. If the resolution fails during the current "lame duck" session, the lawmakers said they will introduce it again during the new Congress next year, during which Republicans will have control of the lower chamber. McCarthy is a favorite to serve as House Speaker in the new Congress. Prior to midterm elections, McCarthy said a Republican-controlled House would be less willing to write a "blank check" to Ukraine.

US President Joe Biden is seeking another \$37.7 billion in new aid to Ukraine from Congress as part of the administration's efforts to prop up Kiev amid Russia's special military operation, according to documents obtained by Sputnik.

Biden recently expressed concern that Republicans could jeopardize future aid for Ukraine. However, Biden administration officials have also repeatedly said they expect bipartisan support on sending military assistance to Kiev to continue.

In total, the United States has committed over \$18.5 billion in military assistance to the country since January 2021.

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Price Cap Plan Does Not Imply US Will Import Russian Oil - Treasury



WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The United States will not import Russian oil under the newly-revealed price cap plan adopted by Washington and its allies, the Treasury said in notice.

"The determination does not authorize the import of Russian oil into the United States, which is prohibited pursuant to EO 14066," the Treasury said on Tuesday.

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No Price Cap for Russian Crude 'Substantially Transformed' Outside of Russia - US Treasury

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The price cap to be imposed on Russian oil will not be applied to crude that is "significantly transformed" outside of Russia, the US Treasury Department announced.

"If, however, after clearing customs, the Russian oil is taken back out on the water (i.e., using maritime transport) without being substantially transformed outside of the Russian Federation, the price cap still applies," the Treasury Department said on Tuesday. "This means any covered services, as listed in the determination, can only be provided by US service providers if such Russian oil is sold at or below the relevant price cap."

Once crude oil is substantially transformed in a jurisdiction other than Russia, it will not be considered to be of Russian origin and so the price cap would no longer be applied, the Treasury Department said.

"Thus, a refiner in a jurisdiction that has not banned the import of Russian oil can purchase crude oil at or below the price cap and rely on US service providers for services related to the maritime transport of that crude oil," it said. "In addition, such a refiner can subsequently refine the crude oil and then export the refined oil via marine transport, including with the use of US service providers, without that refined oil being subject to the price cap. OFAC does not consider blending of crude oil alone to be substantial transformation for the purpose of the determination."

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US Authorizes Transactions Related to Imports of Russian Oil to Some EU States - Treasury

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The United States has authorized transactions related to the importation of Russian oil into Bulgaria, Croatia, or any landlocked member of the European Union, the US Treasury Department said in an updated guidance.

"GL [General License] 56 authorizes certain transactions related to the importation of Russian oil into the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, or landlocked European Union member

states as described in Council Regulation (EU) 2022/879 of June 3, 2022," the guidance said on Tuesday.

The EU regulation, adopted in June, contained several exemptions with respect to Bulgaria, Croatia and any landlocked EU member states, which have been incorporated in the newly published US guidance on the implementation of the price cap policy on Russian crude oil. Specifically, Bulgaria was authorized to execute deals concluded before June 4 contracts for the purchase, import, or transfer of seaborne crude oil and petroleum products from Russia between December 5, 2022 and December 31, 2024.

Croatia was authorized to purchase, import, or transfer of vacuum gas oil originating in Russia, if no alternative supply of vacuum gas oil is available, between February 5, 2023, and December 31, 2023.

Starting December 5, the EU also licensed any landlocked member of the bloc to purchase Russian seaborne oil if the supply of crude oil by pipeline from Russia is interrupted until the supply is restored or until the Council of the EU rules to terminate this exemption.

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#### Biden Administration Extends Moratorium on Student Loan Repayment– DOE

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) – In an effort to calm the fears of student loan borrowers, the Department of Education has announced some measures to mitigate court rulings that have blocked student debt relief, the Biden administration said in a press release Tuesday.

"Today, the U.S. Department of Education announced an extension of the pause on student loan repayment, interest, and collections. The extension will alleviate uncertainty for borrowers as the Biden-Harris Administration asks the Supreme Court to review the lower-court orders that are preventing the Department from providing debt relief for tens of millions of Americans," a DOE press release said.

Administration officials said student loan payments will resume two months after the DOE is allowed to implement the program or pending litigation is settled, which will give the US Supreme Court an opportunity to resolve the case during its current term. However, if the program has not been implemented and the assortment of lawsuits have not been resolved by June 30, 2023, payments will begin again 60 days after that.

According to Best Colleges, between 1995 to March 2022, the total federal student loan debt has grown roughly 750% — from \$187 billion to more than \$1.6 trillion. Best Colleges adds that as with overall student loan debt, the total federal student loan debt has more than tripled in the past 15 years.

"Callous efforts to block student debt relief in the courts have caused tremendous financial uncertainty for millions of borrowers who cannot set their family budgets or even plan for the holidays without a clear picture of their student debt obligations, and it's just plain wrong," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "I want borrowers to know that the Biden-Harris



Administration has their backs and we're as committed as ever to fighting to deliver essential student debt relief to tens of millions of Americans."

Cardona said DOE is extending the payment pause because "it would be deeply unfair to ask borrowers to pay a debt that they wouldn't have to pay if not for the baseless lawsuits brought by Republican officials and special interests."

More than 26 million people have provided DOE with the information needed to be considered for debt relief, and so far, 16 million borrowers have been approved. However, court orders are blocking the department from discharging student loan debt and accepting additional applications. President Biden and Secretary Cardona announced plans to provide targeted student debt relief to borrowers with loans held by the Department of Education in August. Borrowers with annual income during the pandemic of under \$125,000 (for individuals) or under \$250,000 (for married couples or heads of households) who received a Pell Grant in college would be eligible for up to \$20,000 in debt cancellation.

Targeted student debt relief addresses the financial harms caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic and offers borrowers a "smooth transition" back to repayment and helps borrowers facing the highest risk of delinquencies or default once payments resume, administration officials said.

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Artificial Intelligence Could Take Over World, More Dangerous Than Nukes - US Congressman

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the coming decades could become a bigger threat to world peace and human survival than nuclear weapons unless there is an international agreement on how to regulate and limit it, US Congressman Seth Moulton, who co-chaired the Future of Defense Task Force, told an audience at the Hudson Institute. "AI weapons could take over the world in 50 to 100 years: That is not a crazy science fiction scenario," Moulton said on Tuesday. "I would argue that AI systems would be even more dangerous than nuclear weapons"

AI systems and machine learning are dangerously unpredictable and inconceivably powerful but they cannot be banned, suppressed or ignored because they are the future of warfare, Moulton, a former US Marine Corps officer who served in the Iraq War and now sits on the US House Armed Services Committee, said.

"It is a national security imperative to establish rules around the use of AI in the development of an ethical framework. ...Against AI, the computers win every time. Robots usually fly better than human pilots. ... In simulations, the best F-16 pilots against AI, the computers win every time," Moulton said.

AI is the future of warfare and the United States is starting to find itself behind in developing it, Moulton added.

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US Authorizes Offloading of Russian Oil During Vessel Emergencies - Treasury

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The United States has allowed to unload Russian oil only in cases when it is necessary to deal with vessel emergencies, including concerning health safety and environmental protection, the Treasury Department said.

"GL 57 authorizes all transactions prohibited by the determination that are ordinarily incident and necessary to address vessel emergencies related to the health or safety of the crew or environmental protection, including safe docking or anchoring, emergency repairs, or salvage operations," the department said in a notice on Tuesday. "This GL only authorizes the offloading of Russian oil if that offloading is ordinarily incident and necessary to address vessel emergencies as described in GL 57. It does not authorize any transactions related to the sale of Russian oil in violation of the determination."

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House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy Says Supports Audit of Taxpayer Funding for Ukraine

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy said that he supports an audit of aid provided to Ukraine by Congress using US taxpayer funds, when asked by Sputnik about a resolution introduced by Republican lawmakers last week to review the assistance.



"I support auditing every single tax dollar spent by Congress. This is hard-working taxpayer money. We should make sure no matter where we spend money that it's audited and spent wisely," McCarthy said on Tuesday during a press conference.

Last week, House Republicans including Marjorie Taylor Greene and Thomas Massie introduced a resolution pursuing an audit of congressional aid to Ukraine. If the resolution fails during the current "lame duck" session, the lawmakers said they will introduce it again during the new Congress next year, during which Republicans will have control of the lower chamber. McCarthy is a favorite to serve as House Speaker in the new Congress. Prior to midterm elections, McCarthy said a Republican-controlled House would be less willing to write a "blank check" to Ukraine.

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Russia Worried About West Resuming Exports of Yemeni Hydrocarbons - Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, November 23 (Sputnik) - Russia is worried about Western countries resuming exports of Yemeni hydrocarbons, the Russian Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said.

"We are starting to be worried about the ever clearer fixation of our Western colleagues on resuming uninterrupted export of Yemeni hydrocarbons," Polyanskiy said during a UN Security Council meeting on Tuesday.

The Russian diplomat said the concern is due to the risk of overlooking crucial issues that may hinder a settlement of the crisis in Yemen.

Western states have already had a negative effect on the resolution of crises in the Middle East. In April 2022, a two-month ceasefire was declared in Yemen under United Nations auspices by the parties to the conflict. In early August, the parties agreed to extend the truce until October 2 and to negotiate an expanded truce.

UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg announced on October 2 that the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebels failed to negotiate the extension of the truce.

The Houthis refused to extend the deal, demanding that the government pay officials in the Houthi-controlled areas and threatening to hit oil infrastructure in Yemen and neighboring countries.

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House Republican Leader McCarthy Calls on Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas to Resign

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Republican House leader Kevin McCarthy said that he is calling on US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas to resign amid record

illegal immigration at the nation's Southern border, threatening impeachment probes if he does not step down.

"[Mayorkas'] actions have produced the greatest wave of illegal immigration in recorded history. Our country may never recover from Secretary Mayorkas' dereliction of duty. This is why, today, I am calling on the secretary to resign. He cannot and must not remain in that position," McCarthy said on Tuesday.

House Republicans will investigate every action and failure of Mayorkas to determine whether an impeachment inquiry is warranted if he does not resign, McCarthy said.

McCarthy, speaking at the Southern border with Mexico in Texas, criticized the Biden administration's immigration and border control policy. McCarthy claimed the administration's border policy empowers cartels and terrorist organizations. The lawmaker also noted an increasing number of suicides among US border personnel.

McCarthy is a favorite to lead House Republicans as Speaker once the new Congress takes office in January. McCarthy said his colleagues will have his backing to investigate the impacts of the Biden administration's border policy.

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Attacks on Oil Terminals in Yemen Deprive Country of Main Revenue Source - UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 23 (Sputnik) - The attacks by the Ansar Allah group - also known as the Houthis - on Yemen's oil infrastructure are depriving the country's government of its main source of revenue and have significant consequences for the economy, United Nations Special Envoy to Yemen Hans Grundberg said.

"In recent weeks, however, Ansar Allah have carried out attacks against oil terminals and ports in Hadramawt and Shabwa governorates with the aim of depriving the Government of Yemen of its main source of revenue from exporting oil," Grundberg said during a UN Security Council meeting on Tuesday.

The special envoy said the latest attacks occurred on Monday in the Dhabba port in Hadramawt and caused significant economic losses.

In April 2022, a two-month ceasefire was declared in Yemen under United Nations auspices and the support of the parties to the conflict. In early August, the warring sides agreed to extend the truce until October 2 to negotiate an expanded truce.

Grundberg announced on October 2 that the Yemeni government and the Houthis had failed to negotiate the extension of the truce.

The Houthis refused to extend the truce because the government did not agree to pay officials in the Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen and threatened to hit oil infrastructure there and in neighboring countries.

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## SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) -

### GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS

- \* The United States and its G7 and European allies are close to agreeing on a Russian oil price cap at \$60-\$70 per barrel later on Wednesday, The Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday, citing sources in the know.
- \* The European Union (EU) is still deliberating on what the Russian oil price cap level should be and the United States is in touch with its European allies and partners on the issue, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said.
- \* The European Commission proposes to set a price ceiling for the monthly gas futures on the TTF hub index at 275 euros per MWh, European Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson said.
- \* Gas futures in Europe rallied 4% above \$1,280 per barrel after Gazprom's announcement of a possible reduction in supplies through Ukraine, but then retreated.

### TURKEY-RUSSIA RELATIONS

- \* The Russian S-400 air defense system is ready for use in Turkey, Ankara will deploy the system if necessary, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said on Tuesday.
- \* White House National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said that he knows of no conversation between the United States and Russia regarding Turkey's military operations in northern Syria.
- \* Russia and Turkey have some disagreements in matters related to ensuring security in Syria, but the partnership between Moscow and Ankara allows these differences to be discussed openly and constructively, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.
- \* Russia understands Turkey's security concerns related to the situation in Syria, but calls on all parties to avoid steps that could complicate the situation, Peskov told reporters.

### AZERBAIJAN-RUSSIA TALKS

- \* Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed by phone with Azerbaijani leader Ilham Aliyev the practical implementation of the agreements reached in Sochi on October 31, the Kremlin said on Tuesday.
- \* Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin discussed in a phone conversation with Azerbaijani Prime Minister Ali Asadov the implementation of joint projects in transport, energy and other spheres, the Russian cabinet said.

### UKRAINE DEVELOPMENTS

- \* There are practically no intact thermal and hydroelectric power plants in Ukraine, national utility Ukrenergo head Volodymyr Kudrytskyi said on Tuesday.
- \* Ukraine shelled the industrial zone of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (NPP) with large-caliber artillery on November 21, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
- \* The US Treasury announced that it would disburse \$4.5 million to Ukraine in the coming weeks, according to a press release.

\* The United States is considering how to assist Ukraine following extensive damage to its energy infrastructure by Russian air attacks, Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said.

\* President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen announced that an additional 2.5 billion euro (\$2.6 billion) had been allocated by the European Union to support Ukraine.

#### PUTIN TALKS WITH CUBAN LEADER

\* Russian President Vladimir Putin said at a meeting with Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez on Tuesday that Moscow and Havana need to strengthen cooperation as there is such an opportunity .

\* Russia has always opposed various restrictions, embargoes and blockades, Cuba takes the same position toward Russia, these are the results of the traditional friendship between the two countries, Putin said at a meeting with Diaz-Canel Bermudez.

\* Russia can always rely on Cuba, as Havana condemns sanctions imposed by the West against Moscow, Diaz-Canel Bermudez said.

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#### Biden Administration Appoints US Special Representative for Palestinian Affairs - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has appointed a new special representative for Palestinian affairs, the first State Department position based in Washington that will focus solely on matters related to Palestine, Axios reported on Tuesday.

The administration notified Congress that it appointed Hady Amr as the new special representative, the report said, citing a senior State Department official.

Amr, who served the last two years as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Israeli-Palestinian Affairs, will work in the new role under the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, the report said.

Amr will engage closely with US diplomats at the Office of Palestinian Affairs based in Jerusalem, the report said.

The move was several months in the making, the report also said, adding that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had reservations about the plan but expressed willingness to work with Amr.

The State Department notified the outgoing Israeli government about the move, as well as incoming Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the report said.

The United States remains committed to re-opening the Consulate General in Jerusalem and to the vision of a two-state solution, according to the State Department.

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## Israeli Military Chief of Staff Discussed Drill to Simulate Iran Attack With US - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - Aviv Kochavi, Chief of General Staff of the Israel Defense Force, discussed a possible joint drill with the United States to simulate an attack on Iran and its proxies during meetings in Washington this week, Fox News Digital reported on Tuesday.

Kochavi and US Joint Chief of Staff Mark Milley are considering holding a joint drill in the coming weeks to prepare soldiers for a possible conflict between Israel and Iran or their proxies, the report said.

Kochavi met with a number of Pentagon and administration officials on Monday, including Milley and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, to discuss security threats in the Middle East.

"We are at a critical point in time that requires the acceleration of operational plans and cooperation against Iran and its terrorist proxies in the region," Kochavi reportedly said in a statement.

Kochavi and Milley discussed opportunities for greater bilateral cooperation and coordination against a range of threats posed by Iran, as well as other items of mutual strategic interest, Joint Staff Spokesperson Dave Butler said on Monday.

The US and Israel maintain strong military-to-military ties as key partners committed to peace and security in the Middle East, Butler also said.

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## Congress Must Impose Deal to Avoid Rail Strike - US Chamber of Commerce CEO

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The US Congress must impose the deal negotiated by President Joe Biden to avoid a nationwide railroad strike ahead of the holiday season, Chamber of Commerce CEO Suzanne Clark said on Tuesday.

"In September President Biden, who is a champion of labor, struck a deal with the leadership of the 12 railroad unions and railroads to avert a national rail strike. But now four unions are going back on their word and threatening to be the grinch who stole Christmas by forcing a national rail strike. Congress must now impose the deal President Biden negotiated, and the railroads and union leadership agreed to," Clark said in a statement.

A rail strike would substantially exacerbate inflation and economic challenges faced by Americans, Clark said.

On Sunday, train and engine service members of SMART-TD, one of the two largest rail unions in the US, rejected the tentative agreement from September, while the yardmaster members supported it. The rejection increases the possibility of a strike starting December 9.

Members of the other major rail union, BLET, chose to ratify the deal. The two unions collectively comprise half of the unionized workforce on major freight railroads in the US. However, BLET and other rail unions pledged to honor their picket lines if any of the major unions rejected proposed contracts with carriers.

The tentative five-year agreement would address rates of pay, health and welfare and other benefits for approximately 24,000 locomotive engineers and other rail workers. SMART-TD representatives will now return to the bargaining table with the National Carriers Conference Committee to negotiate new terms for its members.

The Biden administration is directly engaged with the parties in the negotiations, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

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#### US Lawmakers Urge Austin to Send Gray Eagle Drones to Ukraine – Letter

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – A bipartisan group of US senators on Tuesday sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin asking him to send Gray Eagle drones to Ukraine following reports that the Biden administration declined Kiev's request.

"Ukraine's Minister of Defense Oleksii Reznikov and Ukraine's Ambassador to the US Oksana Markarova have repeatedly requested the MQ-1C Gray Eagle," the letter said. "This system's operational attributes ... complement existing weapon systems used by the Ukrainians and will increase the lethality of the Ukrainian military."

According to the lawmakers, Gray Eagle could be effectively used by the Ukrainian military to find and attack Russian warships in the Black Sea while presenting a profound near-term advantage to Kiev with only 27 days needed for training.

The lawmakers believe that the alleged introduction of Iranian drones to the battlefield in Ukraine can stall Ukraine's counteroffensive momentum and lay the groundwork for a potential Russian victory over Ukraine that would "significantly damage American security and prosperity."

The senators propose to swap advanced US-specific sensors for alternatives that are vetted for transfer to allies and partners and send the drone systems to Ukraine.

Earlier in November, CNN reported that the Biden administration was looking into ways to modify Gray Eagle drones in order to send them to Ukraine and at the same time lower the risks associated with the systems getting to the hands of the Russian military.

The system is an advanced version of the Predator drone and has an endurance of 25 hours, speeds up to 167 knots (309 km/hour), can operate up to 29,000 feet (8,840 meters), and can carry multiple payloads including four Hellfire air-to-surface missiles and four GBU-44/B Viper Strike glide bombs.

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#### Canada Sends Minister of International Trade to Pacific Alliance Summit - Global Affairs



WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government will send its Minister of International Trade Mary Ng, to the Pacific Alliance Summit taking place in Mexico, Global Affairs Canada said on Tuesday.

"The Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, will visit Mexico City between November 23 and 25, 2022, to attend the Pacific Alliance Summit and celebrate Canada's 10 years as an observer state to the regional trade alliance," Global Affairs said in a press release.

Ng is set to promote Canada's global and gender "inclusive" trade approach to the Summit attendants, while advancing the country's relationship with her partners, the release added. A meeting is scheduled to take place between Ng and her Mexican counterpart, Secretary of Economy Raquel Buenrostro, aiming to bolster the "long-standing" bilateral trade relationship, according to the release.

Representatives of Mexican based Canadian businesses, and stockholders in the country's energy, mining and manufacturing sectors will also have the opportunity to meet with Ng, the release said. Lastly, Ng will meet with Mexican women business leaders.

The Pacific Alliance was formed in April 2011. It comprises Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. Canada became the first non-Latin American observer in 2012.

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US Supreme Court Rejects Trump's Request to Halt Release of Tax Returns to Congress -Order

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court rejected former President Donald Trump's effort to block the House Committee on Ways and Means to obtain six years of his tax return records, a court filing revealed on Tuesday.

"The application for stay of the mandate presented to The Chief Justice and by him referred to the Court is denied. The order heretofore entered by The Chief Justice is vacated," the court filing read.

The House committee has been trying to obtain Trump's tax records since 2019.

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Fifteen State Attorneys General File Lawsuit to Keep US Title 42 in Place - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The attorneys general from 15 Republican-led US states have filed a lawsuit asking a federal court to keep Title 42 in place to allow the authorities to reject asylum-seeking migrants from entering the United States based on health-related issues, NBC News reported on Tuesday.

The fifteen attorneys general on Monday night asked a federal judge to keep the COVID-19-era policy in place and allowed the authorities to restrict asylum-seekers from crossing into the United States after the judge issued a ruling last week that blocked the rule, the report said. The Trump-era Title 42 has blocked some two million asylees and refugees from entering using the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext. Since President Joe Biden assumed office, well over two million immigrants have entered the United States. Estimates by some organizations dealing with immigration issues note more than five million illegal immigrants have entered the country. The attorneys general said that lifting the rule, which the Biden administration has sought to end, will increase the flow of migrants and directly harm their states, the report said. Last week, US District Court Judge Emmet Sullivan vacated Title 42, saying the Biden administration could not continue the immigration policy that the previous Trump administration instituted and practically close the border while restricting asylum-seekers from entering the United States, the report added. The attorneys general argue that allowing migrants to enter the United States will impose financial burdens on the states involuntarily hosting them and added that the states are entitled to "special solitude" in the standing analysis, according to the report.

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Both Major Political Parties Have Failed Americans, Only Care About Power - Activists  
WASHINGTON, November 21 (Sputnik) - Both political parties in the United States have failed the American people because they are backed by corporate interests and only care about seizing power.  
In the midterm elections earlier in November, Democrats defied the pollsters by managing to maintain control of the Senate while losing the House by a slimmer margin than expected. Activist Sam P.K. Collins said neither political party deserved to get people's vote since they have both failed to adequately address inflation, affordable healthcare, and living wages, among other issues.  
"Most candidates are backed by corporate interests or are political insiders," Collins said. "We have few candidates or members of Congress who are from the grassroots."  
Republicans simply care about consolidating power and influence, he added, while Democrats fail to deliver on the right priorities.  
"Progressives compromise - sacrificing the environment... and criminal justice and childcare to try to arrive at a consensus," Collins said.  
Collins also said even with Democrats controlling both chambers, little has changed, especially for African Americans and other minorities.  
"Where we are is no different than before," Collins said. "The collective material position of Black people in this country has not changed in 100 years."  
Pennsylvania Voice Executive Director Salewa Ogunmefun said that there has been so much political divineness in the US while people are still unable to have one job to pay rent, housing is an issue and there are not enough resources in education.



Kerra Bolton, a former Director of Communications for the North Carolina Democratic Party, said Americans would rather attack each other than focus on the most important issues.

"The current evidence points out that its citizens want to be led by their fears of the 'other' and not a better future for our children and grandchildren," Bolton said.

Meanwhile, she added, although a radical right-wing Supreme Court overturned women's rights, Democrats failed to take steps to protect them.

"Democrats are such a weak party. They couldn't do it when they were in power, they couldn't do it when they were out of power," she said. "The truth is, they don't want to."

Now those who are of Gen X and older generations are likely not to leave this world better than they found it, Bolton added.

"Our children and grandchildren will have to fight the same battles we fought," she said.

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US Thinking Through How to Support Ukraine Following Infrastructure Damage - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The United States is considering how to assist Ukraine following extensive damage to its energy infrastructure by Russian air attacks, Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Tuesday.

"We're certainly aware that there have been extreme damages to their electrical grid and infrastructure, and that's something that we're thinking through in terms of what we can provide them," Singh said during a press briefing.

Ukraine is headed into a "tough, cold winter," prompting the US to provide boots, gloves and hats, Singh said. The US continues to assess what Ukraine needs, Singh also said.

Last week, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that approximately 10 million people in the country were without power following a series of Russian strikes on infrastructure. The Russian strikes came in response to the bombing of the Crimean bridge, which Moscow blames on Kiev.

Ukraine has warned Western backers that it does not have enough components to restore heating and electricity supplies, US media reported last week, citing officials familiar with the matter.

NATO is not expecting any large-scale operations in Ukraine until the spring, NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana also said last week.

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Republican Leader McCarthy's Visit to Southern Border 'Political Stunt' - White House

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre on Tuesday described House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy's visit to the US southern border

this week as a political stunt, adding that he has no plan to address the ongoing influx of migration.

"He goes down there and he does a political stunt," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing. "He actually is not putting forth a plan, a plan to help us deal with an issue that we're all seeing." McCarthy is in El Paso, Texas, on Tuesday visiting US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials and overseeing their work on the US-Mexico border amid record-setting migration. The United States has seen two consecutive record breaking years of illegal crossings into the United States since Biden assumed office in January 2021. Well over two million illegal crossings into the United States were recorded in fiscal year 2022, according to CBP. Jean-Pierre said the Biden administration is preparing for the lifting of the Trump-era Title 42 health policy, which authorized US immigration enforcement to immediately deport asylum-seeking migrants due to efforts to mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus. According to a court order, Title 42 is expected to be terminated on December 21 unless the Justice Department appeals the decision to delay the action.

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US Engaged With Concerned Parties in Railroad Union Negotiations - White House  
WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is directly engaged with the respective parties in the railroad union negotiations, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"The President is indeed involved directly. The administration is in touch... with parties involved," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing.

SMART-TD, one of the two largest rail unions in the United States, has voted to reject a national rail agreement, thereby increasing the possibility of a strike starting on December 9.

On Sunday, SMART-TD train and engine service members voted to reject the tentative agreement with Class I railroads from September 15, while the yardmaster members upheld it. Members of the other major rail union, BLET, also ratified the agreement. SMART-TD and BLET comprise half of the unionized workforce on the major freight railroads in the United States. The five-year agreement addresses rates of pay, health and welfare as well as other fringe benefits for approximately 24,000 locomotive engineers and other rail workers. SMART-TD representatives will now return to the bargaining table with the National Carriers Conference Committee, which represents railroad management, to negotiate new terms for its members. If SMART-TD or any of the other three rail unions rejected proposed contracts with the carriers decide to strike, BLET and the other eight rail unions that have ratified the agreement pledged to lawfully honor their picket lines.

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## Canadian Government Appoints Catherine Godin as New Ambassador to Poland – Global Affairs

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – The Canadian Government is rotating personnel in Poland as it appoints Catherine Godin as Ottawa's new Ambassador to Warsaw, Global Affairs Canada said on Tuesday.

"The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today announced the following diplomatic appointments: Catherine Godin becomes Ambassador to the Republic of Poland. Ms. Godin replaces Leslie Scanlon," Global Affairs said in a statement.

Godin's entire academic background was done in the field of International Relations, History and Development, according to information made available by Global Affairs.

The newly appointed Ambassador has held various positions in and outside the country.

In Canada, Ms. Godin has been director general of the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms, and Inclusion. She has also served as executive director of the Human Rights and Indigenous Policy Affairs team.

Abroad, Godin has worked with the International Committee of the Red Cross in Burundi and Sri Lanka, as well as a counsellor and program manager at the Canadian embassy in Washington, D.C, amongst others.

Scanlon has been fulfilling the role of Canadian Ambassador to Poland since 2018.

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Blinken, Stoltenberg Discuss Upcoming NATO Ministerial, Ukraine Support - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke by telephone with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and discussed the upcoming NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Romania and the continued support to Ukraine, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

"Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke today with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the November 29-30 NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Bucharest, Romania. Secretary Blinken and Secretary-General Stoltenberg discussed priorities for the meeting, including continued support to Ukraine, strengthening the Alliance's deterrence and defense, and enhancing resilience," Price said in a statement.

Price said in the statement that the two officials also confirmed their continued support for Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO.

Last week, Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte said a new NATO Secretary-General will be elected in accordance with the procedure at the alliance's summit in Vilnius scheduled to take place in July 2023.

Stoltenberg's term as Secretary-General was due to expire this fall, but it was extended for another year, until September 30, 2023, against the backdrop of the situation in Ukraine.

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#### Meta Spokesperson Denies Report Zuckerberg Set to Resign

NEW YORK, November 22 (Sputnik) - Meta spokesperson Andy Stone denied a report on Tuesday that claimed the social media giant's founder, Mark Zuckerberg, is expected to leave the company next year.

Earlier, theLeak reported, citing an insider source, that Zuckerberg is expected to leave Meta, the rebranded name of Facebook, by the end of this year.

"This is false," Stone said in a tweet responding to theLeak story.

Zuckerberg started Facebook while he was at Harvard University in 2004, at the age of 19, as a site for students to match names with photos of classmates. He took Facebook public in May 2012, becoming its Chief Executive Officer, and now owns about 13% of the company's stock. Facebook was rebranded Meta in October 2021 to reflect the metaverse - a virtual world in which consumers spend increasing parts of their lives, based on artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) technology. This is an important new phase in the digital world that Meta would increasingly find itself in, Zuckerberg said. Despite the name change, the social media site still operated as Facebook with day-to-day users.

Since the rebranding, Meta has also invested billions of dollars on new AI and VR technologies that have not impressed investors.

Meta, which also owns Instagram, said revenue fell 4% in the three months from July through September compared to a year earlier, from \$29 billion to \$27.7 billion. Its stock price is also down 70% from its peak.

Brad Gerstner, whose fund Altimeter Capital owns hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of Meta shares, issued a scathing open letter on his thoughts about the missteps at Meta in October, and Financial Times followed up with a report that said many other investors were frustrated as well with Zuckerberg's plan to double down on investment into the Metaverse.

"The birds are flying south at Meta as the company expects serious executive changes,"

TheLeak said, adding that the Information it obtained suggests that "Zuckerberg has decided to step down himself."

TheLeak said it has reached out to Meta for a response.

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#### Biden Admin. Announces New Campaign for Americans to Receive Updated COVID-19 Vaccine

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has announced a six-week campaign to persuade Americans to receive an updated COVID-19 vaccine before the end of the year, the White House said on Tuesday.

"Today, the Biden administration is announcing a six-week campaign through the end of the year urging Americans to get their updated COVID-19 vaccine," the White House said in a press release. "The six-week campaign will focus on reaching seniors and the communities that were hardest hit by COVID-19 by making it even more convenient to get vaccinated and increasing awareness through paid media."

More than 70,000 locations are currently offering the updated COVID-19 vaccines, the release said.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has taken steps this month to expand to even more locations, including mobile settings and sites in rural and remote areas, through more flexible ordering options for providers, the release also said.

"HHS is standing up pop-up vaccine clinics and educational booths at major community gatherings – from libraries to sporting events to county fairs, and more," the release added. In September, President Joe Biden said during an interview that the COVID-19 pandemic is over. However, the White House said the president's statement on the end of the pandemic was not planned as part of the interview and the administration recently continued the state of emergency in the United States with respect to COVID-19.

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Trump Requests US Federal Judge Unseal Affidavit Supporting Mar-a-Lago Raid - Filing

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump is requesting a federal court order the government to provide an unredacted copy of the affidavit used to support the August 5 raid on his Mar-a-Lago residence, according to a court motion filed Tuesday.

"Plaintiff Donald J. Trump, through undersigned counsel, respectfully moves this Court for an order requiring the Government to provide him and his counsel with an unredacted version of the August 5, 2022, search warrant affidavit," the filing said.

The August raid was undertaken as part of a probe into Trump's handling of sensitive materials from his time as president. In a redacted version of the affidavit supporting the raid, released on August 25, 50 of its 84 total paragraphs are blacked out.

The government claimed that redactions were needed to protect witnesses from intimidation or retaliation, guard investigative avenues and techniques, and keep grand jury secrecy. Trump's legal team in the filing argued that there is no compelling interest in keeping portions of the affidavit redacted.

The request was submitted to Judge Aileen Cannon of the US District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

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## Democrat Warnock Leads Republican Walker by 4% in Georgia US Senate Runoff Election - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - Democratic incumbent Raphael Warnock holds a lead of four percentage points over Republican challenger Herschel Walker in their runoff race for one of Georgia's seats in the US Senate, a poll by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) revealed on Tuesday.

Warnock holds 51% support over Walker's 47%, a release on the poll said. Age plays a major factor in the race, with voters ages 18-49 preferring Warnock by 24 points and voters over 50 preferring Walker by nine points, the release said.

Women also prefer Warnock by 11 points, while men prefer Walker by five, the report said.

Black voters prefer Warnock by 81 points and independents prefer him by 15, the release also said.

The midterm US Senate race in Georgia will go to a runoff next month after neither candidate managed to garner a majority of votes during the initial election.

The AARP-commissioned poll interviewed 1,183 likely Georgia voters, with a statewide representative sample of 500 people and oversamples of 550 people aged 50 and older and 133 black people aged 50 and older, the report said. The poll was conducted between November 11-17. The margin of sampling error for the 500 statewide sample is plus/minus 4.4%, for the sample of voters 50 and over it is plus/minus 3.3% and for the sample of Black voters 50 and over is plus/minus 4.9%.

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## Biden Admin. to Support Overseas Travel Regardless Who Becomes New Speaker – Kirby

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – The Biden administration will continue supporting Congress members during their travel overseas with official visits regardless of who becomes the next House Speaker, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"We will again without speculating about who the next speaker is or whether the next speaker is going to go or not, we will continue to support members of Congress as they travel overseas," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Kirby underscored that the Speaker of the House, like any other member of Congress, has the right to travel abroad, including Taiwan if that's what they so choose.

Democrats are slated to lose their majority in the House of Representatives as midterm election results are finalized, with current Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy poised to take over as House Speaker next Congress.

US-China relations were strained in recent months due to visits by US lawmakers, including Pelosi, to Taiwan despite objections from Beijing. The disagreement resulted in increased Chinese military activity around the island, as well as condemnation of the trips.

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US, Allies to Agree on Russian Oil Price Cap at \$60-\$70 on Wednesday – Reports

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – The United States and its G7 and European allies are close to agreeing on a Russian oil price cap at \$60-\$70 per barrel later on Wednesday, The Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday, citing sources in the know.

Later in the day, ambassadors from all 27 European Union states will meet to decide on the price cap, the report said. The decision to introduce the price cap should result from a unanimous vote by the EU members, while the G7 will vote in parallel to the European bloc. If the countries agree on the terms of the price cap, it will be introduced starting December 5.

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Russia Proposes Creating Entity Under UN Auspices to Ensure Maritime Security - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) - Russia is reiterating its proposal to ensure maritime security by creating a specialized entity under UN auspices that will oversee maritime activities, Russian Deputy Envoy to the United Nations Gennady Kuzmin said on Tuesday. "In light of regional specificities of piracy and robbery at sea, we continue to advocate for the establishment of a specialized entity under the auspices of the UN, which would be responsible for the entire spectrum of issues relating to committing maritime crime," Kuzmin said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

The Russian diplomat noted that pirate attacks have decreased slightly but the root causes of this phenomenon have not been eliminated and the risks to maritime activities remain.

On August 9, Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed considering creating a special agency within the United Nations that would deal with maritime crimes.

To achieve real success it is necessary to unite the efforts of all interested states and international organizations, regional agencies, with the central coordinating role of the United Nations and the UN Security Council, Putin said.

Russia strives to contribute to ensuring security in the Persian Gulf and the Atlantic, where cases of piracy at sea have become more frequent, Putin added.

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US Concerned Turkey's Operation in Syria Could Complicate Fight Against IS - White House

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The United States is concerned that Turkey's counterterrorist operation in northern Syria could complicate the fight by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) against the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia), White House National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"Turkey does continue to suffer a legitimate terrorist threat, particularly to their south. They certainly have every right to defend themselves and their citizens. What concerns us about cross-border operations remains the same... that it might force a reaction by some of our SDF partners that would limit and constrain their ability to continue to fight against ISIS [Islamic State]," Kirby said during a press briefing.

The United States wants to keep up the pressure on the Islamic State with the SDF, Kirby said, adding that the terror group is diminished but still a viable threat.

On Sunday, the Turkish military conducted air operations against bases of the People's Defense Units (YPG) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) - groups outlawed by Turkey - in northern Syria and Iraq. A total of 89 targets were destroyed during the operation, according to the Turkish Defense Ministry.

On Tuesday, regional media reported that Turkey struck a joint base of the international coalition against the Islamic State, led by the United States and the SDF, in Syria's northeastern Al-Hasakah Governorate.

Also on Tuesday, delegations from Turkey, Russia and Iran are holding the 19th round of high-level talks in the Kazakh capital of Astana to discuss a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Syria. The negotiations will be held until November 23, with representatives of the Syrian government, opposition and United Nations set to take part.

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US Knows of No Conversation With Russia on Turkey's Operation in Syria - White House

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Tuesday that he knows of no conversation between the United States and Russia regarding Turkey's military operations in northern Syria. "I know of no conversations with the Russians with respect to Turkish operations in Syria," Kirby said during a press briefing.

On Sunday, Turkey conducted an air operation against militant bases of the People's Defense Units (YPG) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), groups outlawed in Turkey, in northern Syria and Iraq. According to the Turkish Defense Ministry, a total of 89 targets were destroyed during the operation.

Both US and Russian forces have been active in Syria, with the militaries maintaining a deconfliction line to prevent unintended clashes. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday that Russia understands and respects Turkey's security concerns, noting that Russia calls on all parties to refrain from destabilizing steps.



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EU Still Deliberating on Russian Oil Price Cap – White House's Kirby

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – The European Union (EU) is still deliberating on what the Russian oil price cap level should be and the United States is in touch with its European allies and partners on the issue, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"I'm not going to get ahead of the EU in terms of what the cap actually is. They are still deliberating on that," Kirby said during a press briefing. "We are in touch with our EU partners about their progress towards this of course and trying to be as supportive as we can be, particularly in terms of the [price cap] implementation."

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US to Disburse \$4.5 Billion Direct Budget Support for Ukraine – Treasury

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – The US Treasury announced on Tuesday that it would disburse \$4.5 billion to Ukraine in the coming weeks, according to a press release. "Today, the United States continued to uphold its unwavering commitment to Ukraine with the mobilization of an additional \$4.5 billion in grants for direct budget support," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in the release. "These funds will begin disbursing in the coming weeks and help the Government of Ukraine defend against Russia's illegal war by bolstering economic stability and supporting core government services, including wages for hospital workers, government employees, and teachers as well as social assistance for the elderly and vulnerable."

She noted that the latest disbursement would bring total US direct budget support to Ukraine to \$13 billion, all in grants.

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Biden Invites 49 African Countries' Leaders to US-Africa Summit – White House

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden has invited the heads of 49 African states and the African Union (AU) to the US-Africa Leaders summit in Washington next month, Special Assistant to the President and National Security Council Senior Advisor for the US-Africa Leaders Summit Dana Banks said on Tuesday.

“President Biden has invited 49 African heads of states and the head of the African Union to Washington for a 3-day summit to really highlight how the US and African nations are strengthening our partnerships to advance our shared priorities,” Banks told reporters.

The summit will take place on December 13-15. Over the course of the three days, participants will discuss a wide range of global and bilateral issues, including the economy, security, climate change and health care, she added.

“The summit reflects the US strategy towards Sub-Saharan Africa, which really emphasizes the critical importance of the region in meeting these challenges,” Banks noted.

The program for the summit will include a business forum and a discussion among young leaders, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Robert Scott said.

“The third day is the leaders’ day with President Biden and the heads of delegations from the continent,” he added.

Banks emphasized that the goal of the summit is to recognize the global role of the African continent and to highlight shared priorities both globally and regionally.